



TEACHER FIELD GUIDE

Civic learning

Give your comment a destination

How do you make a public comment that actually lands?

City councils, school boards and agencies make decisions about parks, buses and schools in meetings anyone can attend, but most people never find the agenda. A short, specific comment in the right place can be one of the most direct ways a young person, including one too young to vote, takes part in local government.

WHAT STUDENTS MAKE

60-second comment (about 130 words)

THE CIVIC IDEA

Words that do the work.

Agenda item Punto del orden del día

A specific matter scheduled for a meeting, often with a number, a description and an action type.

Gia's comment is about item 4, the proposal to close the park's lighted courts at 8 p.m.

Remit Ámbito de competencia

The matters a body is responsible for and can act on.

The parks committee can recommend on park hours. It can't change bus routes.

Key message Mensaje clave

The one point you want listeners to remember.

Mateo asks Gia, "What is the one thing you want them to answer?"

Public record Registro público

Comments and names may be published and stay searchable.

Gia leaves her friend's private situation out because the comment may stay public.

Specific request Petición concreta

The exact action or answer you are asking the body for.

Gia asks the committee to keep the courts lit until 9 on weekdays through the summer.



VOZ



Item 4, two minutes, sign up by 5 p.m. The destination comes before the draft.



I wrote three pages. The limit is two minutes. Okay: item four, what I saw, why it matters, what I'm asking. Time me.

THE EVIDENCE

Handle the case file.

Every artifact comes with a question. The captions are the lesson.

AGENDA COMMITTEE MEETING, TUESDAY,
6 P.M.

Parks committee agenda, item 4

1 Is this item for discussion or a vote?

NOTICE

POSTED WITH THE AGENDA

Public comment instructions

2 What's the time limit, and can you comment in writing?

DRAFT

MONDAY NIGHT

Gia's three-page draft

3 Which sentence is her actual request?



NEXO

∞ The parks committee can recommend court hours. Bus routes need a different body.

THE WORKSHOP

45 minutes, block by block.



5 MIN

Pawnee vs. real

TEACHER

Contrast a Parks and Recreation meeting clip description with a real agenda page.

STUDENTS

Note three differences.

CHECK

Students notice time limits, agenda items and sign-up rules.

8 MIN

Find the destination

TEACHER

Show the fictional committee agenda and comment instructions.

STUDENTS

Identify the item, the body, the deadline and the time limit.

CHECK

Students find item 4, the parks committee and a 2-minute limit.

10 MIN

Cut the draft

TEACHER

Show Gia's three-page draft summary.

STUDENTS

Highlight what stays: item, observation, why it matters, request.

CHECK

Kept lines map onto the four parts.

12 MIN

Write and time

TEACHER

Model a 90-second comment. Hand out timers.

STUDENTS

Write and time a 90-second comment.

CHECK

Comment fits the time and ends with a specific request.

7 MIN

Listener test

TEACHER

Partners play committee members.

STUDENTS

Repeat the request back in one sentence.

CHECK

Listener can restate the request accurately.

3 MIN

Exit

TEACHER

Ask: what would you leave out because it may become public?

STUDENTS

Write one example.

CHECK

Example involves someone else's private information.

DIFFERENTIATED ROUTES

One case. Seven ways in.

Each route changes what students read, make and prove, not only how long it takes.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Grades 6–8: Write and practice a 60-second comment for the parks committee about the court hours.

SOURCES

The agenda item summary and comment instructions.

PRODUCT

60-second comment (about 130 words)

RAISES THE RIGOR

Add one fact from the agenda to support your point.

Supports

- Four-box organizer: item, what I saw, why it matters, what I ask
- Frames: “I’m here about item __. I noticed __.”
- Timer practice
- Option to submit in writing

Success looks like

- ☐ Names the agenda item
- ☐ Shares one observation
- ☐ Makes one clear request
- ☐ Fits the time

HIGH SCHOOL

Grades 9–10: Cut Gia’s long draft into a 90-second comment, then write a note explaining what you cut and why.

SOURCES

Gia’s draft summary, the agenda and the Seattle comment page as a real example.

PRODUCT

90-second comment plus a 100-word cutting note

RAISES THE RIGOR

Keep Gia’s voice while removing private information and off-topic points.

Supports

- Cutting checklist
- Model before-and-after paragraph

Success looks like

- ☐ Keeps the four essential parts
- ☐ Removes private details
- ☐ Preserves the speaker’s voice
- ☐ Explains cuts clearly

HIGH SCHOOL

Grades 11–12: Find a real upcoming local meeting agenda with an adult, choose an item and write a comment you could submit (submitting is optional).

SOURCES

A real local agenda plus the Seattle page as a model of comment rules.

PRODUCT

Written comment (200–250 words) plus a 100-word process note

RAISES THE RIGOR

Explain whether the body you chose can act on your request, and where to go if it can't.

Supports

- Agenda-reading guide
- Comment template
- Public-record checklist

Success looks like

- ☐ Correctly identifies body, item and remit
- ☐ Comment is specific and supported
- ☐ Process note names the next route
- ☐ Personal information handled carefully

HIGH SCHOOL

Honors: Argue whether public comment is an effective form of participation, using this case and one real meeting you watch.

SOURCES

Case sources plus a recorded local meeting.

PRODUCT

Argument, 550–650 words

RAISES THE RIGOR

Propose one change to comment procedures that could make participation more effective or inclusive.

Supports

- Observation log
- Claim/counterclaim chart

Success looks like

- ☐ Uses observed evidence
- ☐ Considers several perspectives
- ☐ Proposes a specific reform
- ☐ Addresses feasibility

AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE

AP Lang: Analyze how two sample comments to the committee use rhetorical choices, then write your own.

SOURCES

Two teacher-written comments: one emotional and unfocused, one concise and specific.

PRODUCT

Analysis (about 350 words) plus a 90-second comment

RAISES THE RIGOR

Explain how constraints (time limit, formal setting) shape effective rhetoric.

Supports

- Comparison chart
- Commentary stems

Success looks like

- ☐ Thesis explains how constraints shape choices
- ☐ Analyzes specific choices in both comments
- ☐ Own comment applies the analysis
- ☐ Commentary explains effect

MIDDLE YEARS

IB MYP: Investigate “How can young people influence local decisions?” and prepare a comment plus a reflection.

SOURCES

Case sources; global context: Fairness and development.

PRODUCT

Comment plus 200-word reflection

RAISES THE RIGOR

Compare public comment with one other participation route, like a youth council.

Supports

- Inquiry statement frame
- Research note-catcher

Success looks like

- ☐ Clear inquiry statement
- ☐ Accurate process information
- ☐ Thoughtful comparison
- ☐ Reflection on own voice

DIPLOMA

IB DP: Analyze whether public comment builds legitimacy for local decisions or only the appearance of participation.

SOURCES

Case sources and one real meeting recording.

PRODUCT

Analysis, 700–900 words

RAISES THE RIGOR

Consider who is missing from the room and how that affects legitimacy.

Supports

- Perspective chart: officials, speakers, absent residents
- Key concepts: legitimacy, power

Success looks like

- ☐ Accurate description of process
- ☐ Analyzes legitimacy and power
- ☐ Considers absent voices
- ☐ Reaches a reasoned position

Access for every learner

- Provide the agenda with item 4 highlighted
- Offer a written comment in place of speaking
- Spanish vocabulary: orden del día, comentario público, petición
- Allow students to record their comment for practice
- Reduce to a 45-second comment

Extension

- Compare comment rules for two different local bodies
- Track a real agenda item from discussion to vote



ONDA

◆ Her friend's situation would stay in the public record. Her story, her choice.

ANNOTATED STUDENT WORK

What a draft shows us.

Write Gia's 90-second comment to the parks committee.

FIRST DRAFT

Hi, my name is Gia and ¹ I have lived in this neighborhood my whole life. The park is really important to everyone and ² closing it is a terrible idea. I go there all the time with my friends and it's one of the only free things to do around here. My friend works late and this is the only time she can play and ³ she's been going through a lot at home. ⁴ You guys never listen to young people. ⁵ Please don't close the park.

¹ **STRENGTH** Good: it establishes a stake. Keep it short.

² **EVIDENCE** The item closes the lit courts at 8 p.m., not the park. Be precise.

- 3 AUDIENCE Private and permanent in the record. Leave it out unless she chooses to share.
- 4 GAP Understandable, but it gives the committee nothing to act on.
- 5 GAP Name the exact request: keep courts lit until 9 on weekdays?

REVISED

Good evening. I'm Gia Brooks-Romano, and I live two blocks from the park. I'm commenting on item 4, the proposal to turn off the court lights at 8 p.m. I play there after café shifts, and on weekday evenings I've counted twenty to thirty people using the courts between 8 and 9. Many of us work until evening. I understand the concern about noise from nearby residents. I'm asking the committee to keep the lights on until 9 p.m. on weekdays through the summer and to review noise complaints before making a permanent change. Thank you.

ASSESSMENT

One-page rubric.

Mark the evidence you see. Leave room for a comment and a next step.

CRITERION	BEGINNING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	ADVANCED
Evidence	☐ No facts.	☐ General claim about importance.	☐ One specific observation tied to the item.	☐ Observation plus acknowledgment of another perspective.
Reasoning	☐ Attacks the body.	☐ States a feeling only.	☐ Explains why the change matters.	☐ Weighs the concern and offers a middle path.
Audience & purpose	☐ Wrong body or no request.	☐ Request is vague.	☐ Names the item and a specific request.	☐ Request fits the body’s remit and includes a follow-up.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Shortens only.	☐ Removes private details and adds a request.	☐ Explains each cut in terms of time, privacy and purpose.

Evidence I saw

Next step

STANDARDS

What this case teaches, by the book.

CCSS 6–8**4**

SL.6.4 Students present a short comment with relevant facts and a clear request.

SL.8.4 Students present claims with relevant evidence and sound reasoning in a timed comment.

W.7.1 Students write a brief argument with a claim, reason and evidence.

SL.7.1 Students give and receive feedback in a rehearsal, building on each other's ideas.

CCSS 9–10**3**

SL.9-10.4 Students present a comment so listeners can follow the line of reasoning.

SL.9-10.6 Students adapt speech to a formal public-meeting context.

W.9-10.4 Students cut a three-page draft to fit the task, purpose and time limit.

CCSS 11–12**3**

SL.11-12.4 Students present a concise perspective with a clear request, addressing alternatives.

SL.11-12.3 Students evaluate other speakers' reasoning and evidence in a mock meeting.

W.11-12.4 Students produce writing appropriate to a public-comment format.

C3 Framework**4**

D2.Civ.2.6–8 Students explain the role of residents as commenters in local government.

D2.Civ.9.9-12 Students use appropriate deliberative processes in a public meeting.

D2.Civ.1.9-12 Students distinguish the powers of a council committee from those of other bodies.

D4.8.9-12 Students apply democratic procedures by preparing a comment for a real process.

AP English Language

3

Rhetorical Situation (RHS) Students tailor a comment to committee members with limited time.

Reasoning and Organization (REO) Students order the comment: item, observation, reason, request.

Style (STL) Students revise for concision and plain, respectful language.

IB MYP

3

Language and Literature C: Producing text Student produce spoken text with purpose choices for a formal audience

Language and Literature D: Using language Student use a formal register and concise language

Individuals and Societies C: Communicating Student communicate information clearly a time

IB DP

2

Global Politics — key concepts: power and legitimacy

Students analyze how public participation contributes to a decision's legitimacy.

Language A: language and literature — Readers, writers and texts

Students analyze how public comments are shaped by the meeting's rules.

TAKE IT OFF THE PAGE

Find your next local agenda.

1. With a trusted adult, find the website for your city council, school board or parks board
2. Open the next meeting agenda and find one item that affects you
3. Read the public-comment instructions: sign-up, time limit, written option
4. Draft a practice comment and decide with your adult whether to submit it

WHO TO ASK

Clerk of the council or school board, a civics teacher, a student representative to the board if your district has one

STAY SAFE

Public comments and names may be published. Leave out addresses, phone numbers and anyone else's private story. Attend meetings with a trusted adult.

**DUDA**

❓ Could a listener repeat Gia's request in one sentence?